

# The Future of Exercise (1997 and Beyond)

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## Typical Responses to Innovation, In Any Field

During the last twenty-seven years, I have frequently been given the credit (or the blame) for creating the boom that has occurred in the health-club industry since 1970, when I first put Nautilus machines on the market. But while I have never claimed any such credit, it is true that Nautilus machines were the first tools that were really practical for the purpose of operating a successful health club; for the first time, it was then possible to exercise large numbers of people in a relatively brief period of time.

The exercise machines that were already on the market when I first introduced Nautilus machines were very poorly designed and were not practical for use in a health club. Worldwide, the total annual sales of exercise machines was less than \$10,000,000.00 when Nautilus machines first went on the market; but within a very few years, the annual sales of exercise machines had reached a level of several hundred million dollars. While the Nautilus company dominated the market until 1986, when I sold the company, almost all of the exercise machines then being sold by other people were very poor copies of my earliest machines, and the few machines that were not copies of my machines provided absolutely nothing in the way of any improvements; were, in fact, without a single exception, firm steps in the wrong direction. A situation that still remains true today.

Since I sold the Nautilus company, in 1986, it has gone through the hands of three subsequent owners, none of whom had the slightest idea of what they were doing, none of whom knew literally anything about the requirements for proper exercise. Almost inevitably, in their attempts to improve the machines, they have, instead, reduced the potential value of the machines to an enormous degree. Very few of these people ever sought my advice, and the few who did never followed my suggestions. The result being that the Nautilus company no longer dominates the exercise-machine market, as it did throughout the period that I operated the company.

But during the period of ten years that the Nautilus company has steadily moved backwards, my new company, MedX Corporation, has moved forward by leaps and bounds, has literally revolutionized the field of exercise.

In 1986, I sold the Nautilus Company to a man from Dallas, Texas, Travis Ward, a man who turned out to be an outright criminal, a man who was later tried twice in Federal courts in Mississippi for the crime of bribing public officials; unfortunately, he was not convicted in either of the two trials, in both cases the trials ended with a so-called "hung jury," with the majority of the jurors voting for conviction, since he was obviously guilty. Both of the public officials that he had bribed were convicted and went to prison, but Travis managed to escape the arms of justice, probably by bribing members of the jury during his trials.

Not long afterwards, having stripped the Nautilus company of most of its assets, Travis filed for bankruptcy, and then stated that the company was already bankrupt when he bought it. Really? Then why did he buy it? Less than two years before I sold Nautilus, I was listed by Forbes financial magazine as being one of the 400 wealthiest people in this country, a list of wealthy people called "The Forbes 400." And, at the time I sold Nautilus, it was producing a net profit of \$20,000.00 a day; and was doing so in spite of the fact that I was investing millions of dollars every year in medical research, programs of research and development that eventually produced our current MedX line of machines.

Since I first became heavily involved in research, in January of 1972, I have invested a total in excess of \$120,000,000.00 in research and development projects that were conducted for the purpose of improving exercise machines while also developing the testing tools that were required for proper rehabilitation of musculoskeletal injuries. And it should be noted that all of this investment was provided by my own money; I never had anything in the way of either research grants or investments from other people. I now own 100 percent of the stock of MedX Corporation; but that is a situation that may change in the near future, since I am now negotiating with a very large company in Singapore for the sale of 65 percent of the stock in MedX Corporation.

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If this sale of the majority of the stock in MedX Corporation goes through, as planned, then I intend to distribute the 35 percent of the stock that I will retain among a number of my long time employees that have worked with and for me for many years, people who have made enormous contributions to the success of our efforts.

The Nautilus company was certainly not a “one-man-show,” and neither is the MedX Corporation. Since a great deal of our work requires the use of computers, and since I am certainly not a computer expert, I could never have been successful without the assistance of people who really are computer experts. One of my associates has worked with me for more than forty years, another one for more than twenty years, and several others for periods varying from ten to fifteen years, and I believe that such loyalty, and such assistance, should be rewarded. While all of these people have been well paid throughout our association, I believe that giving them the bonus of stock in the company will encourage them to stay with the company after I am gone; and if they stay with the company, that should help to assure the company’s continued success.

Personally, I do not intend to “take the money and run,” but will, instead, continue to be associated with the company in the capacity of a consultant, will always be aware of any future developments and will give the people then running the company as much help as I can.

Not having done as much flying during the last few years as I previously did, I intend to buy another airplane and teach my wife how to fly. Nearly twenty years ago, I took a 17-year-old girl with no previous flying experience, put her in the pilot’s seat of a multi-engined, jet-powered airplane and then “talked her through” all of the procedures to fly the airplane; she started the engines, taxied out to the runway, took off, flew to another airport, and landed the airplane successfully without me ever touching any of the controls. About four years later, having taken and passed all of the written and practical tests required for an Airline Transport Pilot’s license, but still being well below the minimum age for such a license, the highest rating a pilot can ever reach, she was issued a letter by the FAA telling her to bring the letter back to them on her twenty-third birthday and they would issue her license. By which time she already had so-called “type ratings” for several types of large airplanes, including both the Boeing 707 and the 747 “Jumbo jet.” She remains the youngest person in history to ever obtain such licenses, which are usually obtained only by senior airline captains.

So I have no doubts regarding my ability to teach my wife how to fly, to fly well and safely; and since I do not intend to buy another heavy, intercontinental jet, although I owned three of them until about the time I sold Nautilus, she should have a license within a matter of a few weeks. Incidentally, about twelve years ago I transported 63 African elephants from southern Africa to my farm north of Ocala, Florida, using one of the three big jets I owned at that time.

As usual, we made a mistake during that flight with 63 elephants and about 30 people aboard the plane: we failed to consider just how much body heat 63 elephants would produce, so instead of operating the heaters during the flight, as is usual during a flight at 41,000 feet above sea level, because the temperature of the outside air is about 40 degrees below zero at that altitude, we were forced to use the cooling devices that are part of the air conditioning system; and even with such cooling, the air inside the airplane was so hot from the body heat of the elephants that it felt like a sauna. The air was so hot that it was literally raining inside the airplane throughout the long flight.

And just what, if anything, does all of this have to do with exercise? Quite a lot as it happens, because my long experience with flying taught me a number of things that are directly related to exercise, gave me the knowledge required to recognize things that I probably would have overlooked or failed to understand without that experience. A major problem with the educational system in this country resulted from the fact that the schools have steadily moved in the direction of specialization, apparently because of widespread, but mistaken, belief that education should be limited to a very narrow field of interest; but instead of improving education, such an approach has produced millions of graduating students suffering from “tunnel vision.” People whose range of knowledge is so limited that they are not even aware of many things that they need to understand in order to perform their jobs properly.

Having graduated, such people then usually believe that they are an “expert” in their field, whatever it might be, when in fact they are usually not even truly literate.

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I talk to such people nearly every day, and I lecture large groups of them at least twice each month, and, over the years, I have been forced to reduce the level of information that is being presented to a point where it is now somewhat below the level of a kindergarten class; any attempt to communicate anything more complicated than that is an exercise in futility at best, simply flies over their heads, particularly if the information being presented puts the lie to their existing opinions. While many of these people apparently believe what I tell them, very few of them actually understand it.

So, now, instead of telling people the facts about exercise, I try to demonstrate them in a simple manner. And how do people respond to such demonstrations? That depends upon their existing opinions, which usually have nothing at all in common with the truth.

As Max Planck (Nobel Prize winner in 1918 for his contributions to science in the field of quantum mechanics) said . . . *“Scientific discoveries do not prevail by leading their opponents to see the light, but because these opponents will eventually die, and then a new generation will arise that is aware of the facts.”*

Most members of the scientific community have reacted in a similar manner when anything in the way of a relatively new discovery was announced. Doing everything possible to deny the facts, regardless of the evidence.

While at least some people have eventually been given credit for their innovations, it was usually only after many years of bitter controversy with most of the scientific community. The discoveries of the Wright Brothers, Edison, Bell, Lister, Pasteur, the Curies, and a long list of other people who all changed, and improved, the world were all initially ridiculed as nonsense by the leading scientists of their day. Most scientists were still insisting that “everybody knows that you cannot fly” for years after the Wright Brothers first started flying.

Based upon the true history of science, together with my own many years of experience with such people, it appears to me that supposed “experts” in any field react to innovations in a manner that can be predicted; such reactions appear to be instinctive, to be stamped into their genes. The reactions of such supposed “experts” usually follow a five-step process: ONE, having been exposed to an innovation in their field, they will initially ignore it, apparently hoping that it will go away; TWO, but if it does not go away, then they will try to ridicule both the idea and the person who introduced the idea; THREE, and next, if their ridicule does not stop the spread and acceptance of the new idea, then they will violently attack it; FOUR, but if the recent discovery is actually true, they will eventually be forced to try to copy it; FIVE, then, finally, following the established success of anything relatively new, they will suddenly “remember” that it was their idea in the first place.

So the pattern of response is “ignore, ridicule, attack, copy, steal.”

Unfortunately, there are two sides to this coin: the other side having been described best, I believe, by Carl Sagan, in a brief statement entitled “The persistence of bamboozle.”

“One of the saddest lessons of history is this: If we’ve been bamboozled long enough we tend to reject any evidence of the bamboozle. We’re no longer interested in finding out the truth. The bamboozle has captured us. It is simply too painful to acknowledge even to ourselves that we’ve been so credulous. So the old bamboozles tend to persist as the new bamboozles rise.”

Statements very similar to Carl Sagan’s have been made by a long list of other well-known people, but one of my favorites was published about 150 years ago by Edgar Allan Poe; almost certainly basing his opinions on his own experience with people. This brief statement was entitled “The Hunting of the Slan.”

Poe said . . . “I have sometimes amused myself by endeavoring to fancy what would be the fate of any individual gifted, or rather accursed, with an intelligence very far superior to that of his race. Of course, he would be conscious of his superiority nor could he (if otherwise constituted as man is) help manifesting his consciousness. Thus he would make himself enemies at all points. And since his opinions and speculations would likely differ from those of all mankind - that he would be considered a madman, is evident. How horribly painful such a condition! Hell could invent no greater torture than that of being charged with abnormal weakness on account of being abnormally strong.

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“In like manner, nothing can be clearer than that a very generous spirit - truly feeling what all merely profess - must inevitably find itself misconceived on every direction - its motives misinterpreted. Just as extremeness of intelligence would be thought fatuity, so excess of chivalry could not fail of being looked upon as meanness in its last degree - and so with other virtues. This subject is a painful one indeed. That individuals have so soared above the plane of their race is scarcely to be questioned; but, in looking through history for traces of their existence, we should pass over all biographies of ‘the good and the great,’ while we search carefully the slight records of wretches who died in prison, in Bedlam, or upon the gallows.”

At this point, I am sure, many people will be wondering just what all of this has to do with exercise; but, as stated previously, it has a great deal to do with exercise, since it should, at the very least, make it obvious that you should be very cautious about just where you go when seeking meaningful advice about exercise.

Proper exercise provides the potential for enormous benefits, many of which are not even suspected by most people, but any attempt on your part to learn the actual requirements for proper exercise may lead you neck deep into a swamp filled with crocodiles.